

A *Band* IV.
PRESERVATIVE

Against a late

DISCOURSE

OF THE

GROUND *and* REASONS

OF THE

Christian Religion. R



L O N D O N:

Printed for GEORGE EVERDEN, at the
Bible and Crown in Portsmouth; and
sold by J. CLARK and R. HETT in
the Poultry, London. M. DCC. XXV.

Price Four Pence.

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Price 1s. 6d.



CHAP. I.

*Concerning the Design of the Author of the
Discourse of the Reasons and Grounds
of the Christian Religion.*



CARCE any one can write with so *pernicious* a Design, but others either through *Ignorance* or *Artifice* will maintain the Innocence of it: Even this Author has had the good Fortune to meet with such Advocates among the Professors at least, if not the cordial Friends of Christianity; notwithstanding, his late Performance will appear to any one, who rightly apprehends the Design of it, as it requires no great Subtlety to do, to be calculated to subvert the Basis of our Religion.

In one half of his Book he contends against a *literal* Interpretation of Scripture, and having substituted an *Allegorical* Meaning in the Room of it, afterwards, by idle

Stories and impudent Comparisons unfit to be repeated, exposes the Brat of his own Invention, p. 39. He tells us, " The " Proofs taken out of the Old, and urg'd " in the New Testament, being not to be " found in the Old, or not urg'd in the " New, according to the literal and obvious Sense, which they seem to bear in " their suppos'd Places in the Old, are " therefore not Proofs according to scho- " lastick Rules; and again, p. 270, That " the whole Gospel is in every Respect " founded on *Type* and *Allegory*, that the " Apostles in most, if not all Cases, reason'd Typically and Allegorically: " A very innocent Tenet this no Doubt, and the Author a very good and vertuous Man, chargeable with no gross Immorality, as he is represented by many Advocates, who know but little of him.

MR. *Whiston* * has given him a quite different Character, (if Mr. *Collins* be the Author, as the World imagines) which I shall here insert, only premising that 'tis founded on a personal and intimate Knowledge of the Man. " Mr. *Anthony Collins*, " says he, is a Gentleman, who has many " Years taken superabundant Care not to " be suspected of Believing so much as the

* *Proposals for printing authentick Records concerning the Jewish and Christian Religions*, p. 16.

" Apostles

“ Apostles Creed, or the Books of either
 “ the Old or the New Testament, nor in-
 “ deed any Divine Providence at all : Yet
 “ does he claim a Right to be admitted to
 “ take an Oath upon the Bible, and to re-
 “ ceive the Holy Communion it self ; and
 “ he is at this Day admitted to do both,
 “ and in Vertue thereof is in Commission
 “ of the Peace, as a good Church-man,
 “ *i. e.* notwithstanding his open and pro-
 “ fess’d Infidelity, he ventures in the most
 “ solemn Manner to declare his unfeigned
 “ Acknowledgment of the Divine Provi-
 “ dence, of the Truth of the Christian
 “ Religion, and of the Books of Holy
 “ Scripture, that is possible to be done
 “ among Men.

SUCH is the doughty Adversary of our
 Religion : And ’tis some Consolation to
 the Disciples of Christ, that Men must be
 first corrupt in their Manners, and defe-
 ctive in Points of Morality, before they can
 commence downright *Infidels*.





C H A P. II.

Concerning those Prophecies which are deem'd Allegorical : Whether they have been truly fulfill'd or no ?

IN the first Place, it may be safely granted, that several of the Prophecies deliver'd in the Old Testament, and in the New apply'd to our Lord; were literally fulfill'd in other Persons: But then a Distinction must be made between the Subject Matter of a Prophecy's, being *true of a Man*, and its being spoken with a *particular Regard* to him, *i. e.* in other Words, the Purport of it may truly and literally be predicated of another Person, than 'twas originally design'd to characterize: Thus as to what was foretold of Christ, that he should *ride upon an Ass* to Jerusalem, 'twas impossible, but that so familiar a Matter should be verifi'd in thousands of People as well as in him.

In the next Place, it may truly be affirm'd, that a Prophecy may have a visible Relation to one Thing, and yet receive a
full

full and ultimate Completion in another: Thus the Words of *Hosea, ch. ii. 1.* might be spoken partly with Regard to the Coming of the *Israelites out of Egypt*, and yet be more signally fulfill'd in the Return of *our Lord* from thence: No Sceptick will deny our Lord to have been in *Egypt*, and to have come back again, and therefore the Prophecy is true of him; and then in the next Place, that 'twas *originally* spoken with some Respect to him, I am fully convinc'd, because I find it so apply'd by one assisted by the same Spirit as the Prophet was.

THE Holy Spirit of God is the best Expofitor of his own Words, and the most proper to determine the true and full Meaning of them; and 'tis very presumptuous in weak short-sighted Man, to gain-say the Interpretation he puts upon his own Divine Truths, either immediately, or by the Mouth of those whom he has delegated, and sent with authentick Credentials to that Purpose.

EVERY Prophecy is to be understood in the same Latitude and comprehensive Sense as God intended it; and it depending upon the Determinations of the divine Mind, whether it shall relate only to one Man or Matter exclusive of all others, or in common to many, *He* is the only proper Judge when it is fully accomplish'd.

THE

THE Sentences of Scripture are big with Divine Truths; a great deal is couch'd under a few Words, and if a Prophecy was design'd any Way to relate to a distant Event, the Aspect it may have to some nearer Matter does not evacuate the Relation it has to the other.

I OBSERVE farther that all the old Prophecies are not only apply'd in the Gospel agreeably to the Intention of the Prophets, but also in such a Manner, as the Words themselves, according to the common Rules of Interpretation will bear; so that a Distinction may be made between an Allegorical and a Secondary Completion of them. This Opinion has something of Novelty in it, but, with Submission to more critical Judgments, it is founded in the Reason of the Thing; nor does that seem to be an Allegory, where no uncommon Metaphor is pretended, but the Words, according to the ordinary Forms of Speech, in Poetick Writings especially, and such we esteem some of the Prophets to be, are capable of being apply'd to different Persons or Events.

THIS may be illustrated by the following Instance, which I choose the rather, because it is the most liable to Objection: There is no Allegory in the Words of Hosea above-cited, as apply'd by St. Matthew, ch. i. 22. *Out of Egypt have I called my*
Son.

Son. For 'twas not only usual for the Prophets to represent a Thing as already past, which was then future, but as it was God, that spake by their Mouths, whose Eternity is of so mysterious a Nature, that what is still *in fieri* with regard to *Man*, may be said to *have existed* with regard to *him*, he may with a peculiar Elegancy, as well as Propriety, express himself in this Figurative Manner.

NOR shall we deviate more from the Letter of the Words, if we thus change the *Tense*, the *perfect* into the *future*, to apply them to the Coming of our *Saviour* out of Egypt; than if we change the *Number*, the *singular*, *Son*, into the *plural*, *Sons*, to make them applicable to the Return of the *Israelites* from thence.

AND tho' we ought not to be too inquisitive into the Reasons of Providence, yet some Account may be given, why, out of the many Prophecies concerning our Saviour, some are capable of such different Applications; for if all the Things foretold of him, had been of an uncommon Nature, and appropriate only to him, the Evidences of his being the *Messias* would have been too glaring; and what God in his infinite Wisdom had pre-determin'd, that *he should be a Man of Sorrow and acquainted with Grief*, that he should be *revil'd*, &c. would have been prevented, unless God

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had

had blinded the Eyes of the *Jews*, and hardned their Hearts by a Power inconsistent with the Freedom of Man's Will : For how inconceivable is it, without such a particular Interposition of Providence, that they could have treated him with so much Acrimony and Contempt, if he had come with so many visible Signatures of the *Messias*, whom they earnestly expected and long'd for. *

WHEREAS some Parts of his Character corresponding with other People, as well as with him, the Counsel of God above-mention'd was in less Danger of being frustrated ; and yet the Evidences of his *Messias-ship* are sufficiently plain, every Thing that was said of the *Messias* concentring in him ; for the Truth of which I dare even appeal to Mr. C--- himself, who nowhere affirms that any one Part of the Character of the *Messias* is unanswer'd by him.

* I wot that through Ignorance ye did it, as did also your Rulers, Acts iii. 17. Had they known it, they would not have crucify'd, the Lord of Glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8.





C H A P III.

Concerning the Evidence arising from the Completion of the Prophecies deem'd Allegorical for the Truth of Christianity.

SUPPOSING the Prophecies deliver'd in the Old Testament, to have been fulfill'd in our Saviour only in an *Allegorical* Way, such a Completion of them could not have been without its proper Weight, when the Gospel was first promulgated; because however odd such Reasonings may appear to us, they were mightily in Vogue at that Time, and Men are to be convinc'd in their own Way.

I WILL not dispute with Mr. C--- whether *Allegory* was not as much in use among the *Heathens*, as among the *Jews*, nor do I envy him the pompous Shew of Reading, which he makes, to evince a Point so remote from his Purpose, and indeed detrimental to his main Design; for the more it was in use among either, the more likely they were to be convinc'd by it; I only wonder he could so slightly rub over that

considerable Objection, which he is aware lies against him: " It may be objected, " says he, from divers learned Authors, " to what I have advanc'd, that Christi- " anity is not founded on the Prophetical " or other Quotations made from the Old " in the New Testament, but that those " Quotations being *Allegorically* apply'd " by the Authors of the New Testament " are only Arguments *ad Hominem*, to " convince the *Jews* of the Truth of " Christianity, who allow'd such a Method " of arguing to be valid, and are not Argu- " ments to the rest of Mankind, p. 79.

THE learned Authors, whoever they are, whom he means, will I dare say, if consulted, inform him, that he has either unfairly propos'd the Objection, or but weakly answer'd it: These *Allegorical* Reasonings were design'd as Proofs *ad Hominem*, principally perhaps to the *Jews*, but not so, as entirely to exclude the *Gentiles*. And if either the one or the other were likely to receive any Degree of Conviction from them, this will vindicate the Apostles and Evangelists in the use of them; and Mr. C--- must blush when he reflects, that he has not so much as offer'd to disprove that which should have been the whole Scope of his Answer to the Objection which lies against him.

ALL

ALL that is any ways pertinent in this long Chapter is this.

“THE Authors of the Books of the New Testament always argue *absolutely* from the Quotations they make out of the Books of the Old Testament, *Moses* and the *Prophets* are every where represented to be a just Foundation for Christianity, and *Paul* expressly says, that the Gospel which was kept secret since the World began, was now made manifest by the Scriptures of the Prophets, wherein that Gospel was secretly contain'd to all Nations, by the Means of the Preachers of the Gospel, who gave the secret or spiritual Sense of those Scriptures.
p. 79, 80.

BUT Mr. C--- must excuse me, if I call this a palpable Falshood; *Moses* and the *Prophets* are a just, tho' by the bye, not the *sole* Foundation of Christianity; but then this is to be understood of the whole complex Body or System of their Writings, and not singly of those which Mr. C--- is confin'd to the Consideration of, *viz.* those which the Apostles reason *Allegorically* from. Nor can the Words of St. *Paul* be restrain'd to such Prophecies as the Preachers of the Gospel gave the secret or spiritual Sense of; and I challenge this Author to assign one single Instance in the whole New Testament, where the Accomplishment of such Prophecies

Prophecies is insisted on as an absolute Proof of Christianity.

THERE is a large Diversity in the Degrees of Evidence, every Argument has not the Nature of a Demonstration, and so far is it from being a rational Objection against the Evangelical Writers; that they insisted on some Proofs, which are not absolutely convincing, that it would have been a culpable Omission, if they had pass'd by one, that carries any the least Degree of Evidence along with it, or is any Ways likely to make so much as a single Proselyte.

I MUST add that tho' a single Argument of this Kind may have but little Force, yet where there is a large Combination of them, to establish the same Point, they mutually strengthen each other, so that the joint Evidence arising from the whole, is a reasonable Ground of Conviction, and falls but little short of a Demonstration; nor humanly speaking is it credible, that so wonderful a Variety of probable Circumstances could concur to point out *Jesus* for the *Messias*, if in Truth he was not the Person.





C H A P IV.

That there are other Prophecies in Proof of Christianity, beside those which are call'd Allegorical ones.

'TIS the fallacious Design of Mr. C-- to perswade his Readers, that all the Proofs of Christianity from the Old Testament are *Allegorical*. On the contrary 'tis plain that some of the antient Prophecies are *literally* fulfill'd in our Lord, and in no other Person. Out of the many that might be enumerated to this Purpose, I shall particularly insist on the four following, the three first of which Mr. C--- has not thought fit to exercise his *Allegorizing* Faculty upon, nor so much as mention'd.

THE first is that remarkable Passage in *Isaiah, ch. xxxv. 5, 6. Then the Eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame Man leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the dumb shall sing.* Why was this Prophecy unworthy the Notice of Mr. C---? Why did he not particularly mention the Person it was primarily fulfill'd in, and shew how it related to our Lord only in a secondary

secondary Way? No, the Difficulty was too great. He durst not attempt it, bold as he is, but is forc'd into a Confession, which utterly ruins his darling Scheme. By the Way, this is the most considerable Place where the Miracles of our Lord are foretold; and Mr. C-- acknowledges, p. 37, "That those Miracles were prophesy'd of in the Old Testament, like the other Matters of the Gospel." How! were the Miracles wrought by our Lord prophesy'd of? A notable Confession this! We have then some few Prophecies at least, and let me add, those very considerable ones too, confessedly relating to our Lord, and accomplish'd in none but him.

AND this is enough to satisfy every modest Believer: What tho' some Prophecies are apply'd to our Lord seemingly beside their first Intention? If there are others particularly setting forth the Miracles to be wrought by him, which we have a competent Assurance he punctually fulfill'd, this is enough to keep us steady in the Profession of Christianity.

AGAIN we must violently wrest the Prophecy, *Psa. xvi. 10.* to apply it otherwise than to our Lord's Resurrection. St. Peter argues demonstratively that, literally understood, it could have no relation at all to the Psalmist, *Let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he*
is

is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this Day. Therefore being a Prophet, &c. he spake of the Resurrection of Christ, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither his Flesh did see Corruption.

ACCORDINGLY we have the Matter of our Lord's Resurrection ascertain'd to us, by the authentick Testimony of those, who saw and convers'd with him, after he was risen, which Testimony they bore unto the Death; and even the most incredulous of them, one who suspended his Belief, till a Miracle remov'd the Scruple he was under, seal'd it with his Blood.

A THIRD Prophecy is that of *Micah*, v. 2. *But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, tho' thou be little among the Thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose Goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* This the *Jews*, assembled in Council before *Herod*, interpreted as relating to the *Messias*, *Matt. ii. 6.* and many later *Jews*, * so irresistible is the Force of Truth, have been oblig'd to make the same Application of it.

Now the *Jewish* Polity having been long dissolv'd, and *Bethlehem Judah* depopulated, as the antient *Apologists* for Christi-

* Pocock in Locum.

anity well argued, it necessarily follows, that either this Prophecy was false, or else spoken with Relation to, and verify'd in our Lord; the Reason of which is very plain, because none but He, of all the *Jewish Rulers* was born there.

BESIDE, he and only he, *who was in the Beginning with God*, could answer the sublime Character of the Person here intended: Of whom else can it be said with any tolerable Propriety of Speech, *that his Goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting?*

THE fourth and last Prophecy is that of *Isaiah* vii. 10. and following Verses, which I shall here recite at large.

Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying,

Ask thee a Sign of the Lord thy God, ask it either in the Depth or in the Height above.

But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.

And he said, hear ye now, O House of David, Is it a small Thing for you to weary Men, but will ye weary my God also?

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a Sign, behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel.

Butter and Honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the Evil and choose the Good.

For

For before the Child shall know to refuse the Evil and choose the Good, the Land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings.

THIS St. Matthew applies to the Conception of the *Virgin Mary*, and the Nativity of *our Lord*. On the contrary *our modest Correcter* of the inspir'd Writings, contends it is applicable only to the Birth of the *Prophet's own Child* in the Time of *Ahaz King of Judah*, p. 41. In Opposition to which Interpretation, and the Arguments produc'd by him to support it, I offer the following Considerations.

First, THE *original Word* is rightly translated *Virgin*, and will bear no other Construction; so *Calvin, Junius, Piscator, Lightfoot, Whitby*, and all our celebrated Masters of the *Hebrew Tongue* understand it; they are unanimous, that 'tis deriv'd from a *Radix* which signifies *to hide or cover*; as 'twas customary in the *Eastern Countries* for Virgins to be shut up and debarr'd the Conversation of Men, 2 Mac. iii. 19.

AND 'tis of considerable Weight, that the *Seventy*, long enough before St. Matthew wrote his Gospel, rendred it *παρθενικη*, which as fully denotes a *Female* that never had any carnal Commerce with the other Sex, as a *Virgin* in our Language does.

Secondly, THE Child was to be call'd *Immanuel*, *God with us*, which was too grand

a Name for the Prophet's own Child, or any other that was *mere Man*; accordingly we find in the next Chapter that God order'd him another Name, and of a different Import.

AND if it be said, that neither was our Lord call'd *Immanuel* but *Jesus*, 'tis easy to reply, these two Names differ more in Sound than in Signification; for the blessed *Jesus* was *Immanuel*, and was *Jesus* only by being *Immanuel*, i. e. *by taking the Manhood into God, and dwelling among us.*

Thirdly, THIS Promise is intended as a Sign or a Miracle, and introduc'd with the Term *Behold*, which is expressive of Solemnity, and us'd to excite Attention to something wonderful that is going to be spoken; but where is the great Wonder of a *Young Woman's* being with Child after the ordinary Manner? This is to evacuate the Miracle, and explain away the Prodigy that was certainly intended; but the Plea is, 'twas declar'd, that it would be a *Male-Child*: And what then? Where is the great Significancy of this? How unlikely was it, that the Prophet should gain Credit by so trivial a Prediction? This could be no Sign till the Child was born, and even then it might be deem'd rather a lucky Guess, than the Result of a certain Prescience: It could give no immediate Consolation to *Ahaz*, as was intended, nor divert him from sending for Succours from *Assyria*, which

which the Prophet was dissuading him against: The Mother was not as yet with Child, and *Jerusalem* might have been taken, and the King's Family destroy'd, before she could be deliver'd, or the Sign accomplish'd.

Fourthly, THO' our Saviour was not born till seven hundred Years afterwards, yet, supposing this Promise to relate to him, it might be a Sign to *Abaz*: 'Twas such a Sign, as might naturally effect what it was design'd for, namely, to raise the drooping Spirits of *Abaz* and his People: Long before this Time they had the Promise of a *Messias*, and the Prophet, by reminding them of this Promise, suggested that they were God's peculiar People; from whence they might naturally infer, that trusting in him, *they need not fear what Man could do unto them*. 'Twas as if the Prophet reason'd *a majori ad minus*; for God having graciously promis'd them the *Messias*, what might they not expect? What need had they to fear, that so good a Friend would leave or forsake them in their present Distress?

BESIDES, the *Messias* being to spring from the House of *David*, and to inherit the Throne of his Father *David*, the Preservation of that Family, and of the Kingdom in that Family was necessary to the Accomplishment of God's Promise; and so this was a good Sign to, and proper to convince *Abaz*, that he need not fear what
the

the Confederates had threatned, *viz.* that they would *ruin the City Jerusalem, take away his Crown, and set up a new King over Judah, the Son of Tabeal.*

I OBSERVE *Lastly*, that tho' the Child promis'd in the fourteenth Verse must be meant our Saviour, for the Reasons above-mention'd, yet there is no Necessity to understand the sixteenth Verse as relating to him, but a Child indefinitely may be meant; nor will this destroy the Coherence of the Passage, as appears from the following Paraphrase.

Therefore, since ye refuse to ask a Sign, whereby you may be convinc'd that God will deliver you out of your present Dangers, the Lord himself will give you a Sign unask'd, Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his Name Immanuel: Butter and Honey, &c. You know he has been promis'd already, and if you believe the Scripture, you must acknowledge that the Sceptre cannot either now or hereafter depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between his Feet, but that the Seed of David will continue upon his Throne, until Shiloh this Immanuel come; for, or rather yea, before a Child, or in less Time than a Child, a new-born Babe shall know how to refuse the Evil and choose the Good, i. e. before three or four Years are expir'd, the Land which thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings: So far shall they

they be from depriving thee of thy Crown, as they threaten, that they shall lose their own, and their Lives too, in so short a Time.

THERE is no Force put upon the Words in this Interpretation; the Sense is preserv'd, the Connection is plain, and 'tis impossible they could be true if otherwise interpreted.

UPON the whole we may conclude 'tis most unwarrantably asserted by this Author, *That the whole Gospel is in every Respect founded on Type and Allegory*, and these few Instances are sufficient to evince the contrary.

C H A P. V.

Miracles consider'd as a Proof of Christianity.

BY Miracles I understand certain surprising Facts above or contrary to the ordinary Course of Nature, several of which Kind of Facts were done by our Lord. The Account which he himself gave of his mighty Operations to St. John Baptist, is, *The Blind receive their Sight, and the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised up*, Matt. xi. 5.

THE Patrons of Christianity have strongly argued from these Miracles in Defence of it,

it, and therefore Mr. C--- has taken no small Pains to depreciate the Evidence arising from them. P. 31. He says, " If the
 " Proofs for Christianity from the Old Te-
 " stament be not valid, if the Arguments
 " founded on those Books be not conclu-
 " sive, and the Prophecies cited from thence
 " be not fulfill'd, then has Christianity no
 " just Foundation ; for the Foundation on
 " which *Jesus* and his Apostles built it, is
 " then invalid and false: Nor can the Mi-
 " racles said to be wrought by *Jesus* and
 " his Apostles in behalf of Christianity
 " avail any thing in the Case; for Mira-
 " cles can never render a Foundation valid,
 " which in itself is invalid, can never make
 " a false Inference true, can never make
 " a Prophecy fulfill'd which is not fulfill'd.
 " Again, p. 37. Miracles wrought by *Je-*
 " *sus* are according to the Gospel-Scheme
 " no absolute Proofs of his being the *Messi-*
 " *as*, or of the Truth of Christianity ;
 " those Miracles were prophecy'd of in
 " the Old Testament, like the other Mat-
 " ters of the Gospel ; and therefore they
 " are no otherwise to be consider'd as
 " Proofs of those Points, than as fulfilling
 " the Sayings in the Old Testament, like
 " other Gospel-Matters and Events, or (as
 " a *Boylean* Lecturer well expresses it) as
 " comprehended in, and exactly consonant
 " to the Prophecies concerning the *Messi-*
 " *as*: In that Sense they are good Proofs,
 " and

“ and in that Sense only; for, as I have
 “ before observ’d, if *Jesus* is not the Per-
 “ son prophesy’d of as the *Messias* in the
 “ Old Testament, his Miracles will not
 “ prove him to be so, nor prove his divine
 “ Mission.”

IN these and other Passages to the same Purpose, he makes light of the Miracles of our Lord, and the Evidence arising from them in favour of Christianity. Now it must be confess’d, they are in themselves no absolute Proofs of his being the *Messias*, nor would the *Jews* have been under any Obligation to receive him as such, if he had not fully answer’d the true Character of that Person: But we contend, and are ready to prove it, whenever any Exception shall be made, that he has answer’d it to a Tittle, and farther, that the Performance of those Miracles is the most considerable and distinguishing Part of his Character.

THE *Jews* were under great Expectations of such mighty Works to be done by him, and therefore upon seeing what our Lord did, they cry’d out, *This is of a Truth that Prophet that should come into the World*, John vi. 14. and upon another Occasion, *When Christ cometh, will he do more Miracles than these, which this Man has done?* ch. vii. 31. Which Passages being so plain, and so many others occurring to the same Purpose, ’tis Matter of Wonder that

Mr. C--- could blunder out that notorious Falshood, p. 34. "The *Jews* were not in "the least dispos'd to take *Jesus* for the "*Messias* on account of his Miracles." which every *Plough-man* that has but read his *Bible* can convict him of.

NOR is it supposable that the *Jews* could have withstood so bright an Evidence as this, if to bring about the wise Designs of Providence, concerning his Death and Sufferings, they had not been under the strongest Expectations of a *Messias*, that would be a temporal Prince, and therefore prejudic'd against one that appear'd in so humble a State, and without any the least Affectation of Grandeur and Popularity. Nay, even under this Disadvantage, so convincing a Proof of his *Messias-ship* were the Miracles he did, that he was forc'd to retire a while out of the View of the People, lest they should come and take him by Force to make him a King, John vii. 15.

AND this will furnish us with an Answer to what Mr. C--- largely insists on, that the *Jews* did not receive him as the *Messias*; for 'twas his Design, conformably to the determinate Counsel of his Father, not to be so receiv'd, but to be rejected and slain by them.

BESIDES, by what Rules of Logick can the Delusions of that People, and their Mis-interpretations of Scripture be urg'd as an Argument in this Case? What tho'
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all the *Jews* and Mr. C---- too will not allow our Lord to be the promis'd *Messias*, does this prove that he is not so ? Nothing can be more plain than the Scriptures, which foretold of *Christ's* Coming in a State of Humiliation ; and if the *Jews* expected a *temporal* Prince, this only shews, that they mistook the Nature of his Kingdom, and dream'd of a *temporal* when only a *spiritual* Deliverer was intended.

BUT supposing our Lord not to have been the *Messias* of the *Jews*, upon what Grounds is it that Mr. C---- so peremptorily asserts, that his *Miracles do not prove his divine Mission* ? This is a Matter of a distinct Consideration from the former ; and Mr. C---- himself acknowledges, " That God can never be suppos'd often to permit Miracles " to be done for the Confirmation of a " false or pretended Mission, p. 32." To which I shall only add, that we may reasonably presume, he never will permit it at all, unless in such a Case as that of *Jannes* and *Jambres*, where *Moses* was ready to discredit them by a visible Superiority of Power : In all other possible Cases, an Ability to work Miracles is an absolute Proof of a divine Mission.

BISHOP *Stillingfleet*, 'tis true, and other learned Divines have been of a different Opinion : But with all due Deference to so great Authorities, they seem to derogate from the Goodness and Veracity of God ;

who cannot, consistently with these his necessary and essential Attributes, countenance an Imposture, by giving it as incontestable a Sanction, as perhaps 'tis possible for him, with all his Omnipotence, to give the most divine Truth.

As to that Passage in the Old Testament, *If there arise among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the Words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of Dreams. Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3.* And that in the New Testament, *Mat. xxiv. 24. There shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall shew great Signs and Wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very Elect.* It cannot be inferr'd from these Passages, that true Miracles may be perform'd by false Prophets; the former, which is the more plausible, speaks only of such a Sign or Wonder, *i. e.* a strange Prediction, as shall come to pass, and a single Instance of this Kind may possibly happen, tho' the Prophet had no Revelation of the Matter from God, and no certain Prescience of the Event.

BUT what if we allow that real Miracles are here intended? Will it be a forc'd Construction of the Words, to understand them
only

only as a cautionary Precept? And considering the Temper of the *Jews*, might it not answer some wise Design of Providence, to forewarn them, never to be seduc'd into Idolatry, no, not supposing Miracles should be perform'd to incline 'em to it; tho' such a Case cannot in the Nature of the Thing possibly happen, but under such a Limitation as that above-mention'd. 'Twas only upon this Account, to caution them not to be seduc'd upon any the most plausible Pretences, that *St. Paul* tells the *Galatians*, *ch. i. 8. Tho' we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel to you, than that which we have preach'd, let him be accursed*: For 'twould be too severe a Trial of Mens Faith, such as a gracious God neither will nor can bring them under, if one of the Host of Heaven should in Fact be detach'd from thence, to preach a false Gospel, especially at this Distance of Time from the Apostolical Age. 'Tis natural for us to be most affected by what we see with our own Eyes, and if a new Gospel should come attested by the Hand and Seal of God, this would too strongly incline us to suspect the Grounds of our present Creed, and to apostatize from it, especially if it should appear in it self no ways repugnant to the Reason of our Minds; and 'tis possible it might be so fram'd, and yet in some Respects be inconsistent with the Dispensation of Christ.

'Tis

'Tis remarkable farther, that beside *Jannes* and *Jambres*, which has already been accounted for, no one in Fact was ever able to perform a Miracle to support the Credit of an Imposture; *Simon M. Dositheus*, and the other *false Christs and false Prophets* foretold of by our Saviour in the above-cited Passage of *St. Matthew*, of whom *Josephus* and Church-Historians have given large Accounts, in none of their Works transcended the Power of Nature, and all the Credit they had, was gain'd by the Deception of the too credulous Multitude.

UPON the whole we may conclude, the Miracles of our Lord are a full Evidence of his divine Mission, and the Reasoning of *Nicodemus* is conclusive even to a Demonstration, *We know that thou art a Teacher come from God; for no Man can do the Works which thou dost, except God be with him.*

CONCLUSION:

WHAT has been offer'd, will I hope in some Measure serve as an *Antidote* against the *Poison* of this pernicious Book; I had once some Thoughts of drawing forth another Argument in Defence of Christianity, *viz.* the Accomplishment of the Prophecies deliver'd in the New Testament: But as Mr. C--- has not thought fit to attack us in this Quarter, 'twill be needless; and this Argument stands firm and unshaken, as set forth

forth by Dr. *Clark*, and other learned Defenders of our Faith.

THERE are many other exceptionable Passages in this Author, particularly between p. 13 and 20. where He represents all “ the Books of the New Testament as occasional Books, accidentally made Canonical, and not declar’d to be all Canonical, till the seventh Century.” Concerning which I shall only say, that tho’ some *private* Persons in the first Ages of Christianity, out of Ignorance, Malice, or a culpable Curiosity, call’d in Question some of the now receiv’d Canon of the New Testament, yet no *National Church* or *Council* ever refus’d to receive the *whole*. And the most considerable of the primitive Writers, have left upon Record compleat Catalogues of the Canonical Books, which is the Standard we go by.

AND now after all, we may stand still and wonder, what it is that can induce Men, after the many shameful Defeats they have had, still to renew their feeble Attacks upon Christianity, a Religion so amiable in it self, and so well supported: Not to insist upon the Purity of its Precepts, their Conformity to the Divine Nature, and their Subserviency to the publick Good of Mankind; I am sure, I shall speak the general Sense of all the good and vertuous Men among us, if I call it the Source of all rational Comfort and solid Satisfaction. When
a Man

a Man reflects upon his past Conduct, and the long Series of Wickedness he has gone thro', in Opposition to the Suggestions of the Spirit of God, and the Convictions of his own Mind; when he recollects the various Extravagancies of his Youth, and his grosser Miscarriages in a more advanced Age, how must he sink under the Anguish of these Reflections without the Consolation of the Gospel?

Mr. C--- is doubtless ambitious of gaining Profelytes to his Scheme, but let him consider, that so many Profelytes as he makes, so many Men he plunges into Diffidence at least, if not Despair. No other Scheme of Religion but the Christian, can support a Man under the Thoughts of standing in Judgment before an omniscient God. Even the most circumpect in their Lives, whose Vertues rise to the supreme Height of possible Perfection in this Life, have many Sins not only of Ignorance and Infirmary, but also of Presumption to accuse themselves of. And let the Disciples of Mr. C--- consider it, there can be no sufficient Grounds to hope for an Expiation of them, but thro' the Blood of the New Covenant, or unless we believe that Jesus Christ came from God, to reveal his Will to Mankind, and to die an expiatory Sacrifice for our Sins.

